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GAMBIANS DEMAND ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT

Abstract: Gambians are losing trust in their government as they experience widespread corruption and mismanagement of public resources. They call for the implementation and integration of an anti-corruption framework that would ensure transparency and accountability in the central management of government affairs.

Gambians demand action against corruption in government

The main purpose of this article is to examine the reasons why The Gambia has not been able to implement and integrate a sustainable anti-corruption framework into the core management of its government affairs. The Gambia is facing a serious crisis of confidence in its government, as it suffers from rampant corruption and poor management of public resources. The people demand the establishment and integration of an anti-corruption framework that would guarantee transparency and accountability in the core management of its government affairs.

Nonetheless, one of the main obstacles to the development and adoption of a sustainable anti-corruption framework in The Gambia is the absence of political will to tackle corruption. The new government has failed to deliver on its promises to fight corruption and improve governance, showing a lack of political will and commitment to implement and enforce the necessary reforms. For instance, the anti-corruption law that was drafted in 2019 has not been passed by the National Assembly, nor has the draft constitution that was rejected in 2020. The draft constitution had provisions that would have enhanced the independence and accountability of public institutions such as the judiciary, the auditor general, the ombudsman, the anti-corruption commission and protect for whistleblowers[1]. Moreover, some members of the current government have faced allegations of corruption or involvement in human rights violations under the previous regime[2].

One of the key factors for fighting corruption effectively is having the power and resources to influence the policies and practices that can prevent and tackle corruption. However, The Gambia faces many challenges in creating an anti-corruption framework and a method to evaluate the ability of anti-corruption authorities to carry out and oversee anti-corruption measures. The country has a weak system of managing public finances with low levels of transparency and accountability in budgeting, procurement and audit processes[3]. The public sector

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[1] Corruption in The Gambia - A disease that needs urgent cure. https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/opinion/corruption-in-the-gambia-a-disease-that-needs-urgent-cure Access October 9, 2023

[2] Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in the Gambia. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/kproducts/Gambia-2021_Overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf. Access 9 October 2023

[3] IMF Assesses The Gambia's Corruption and Governance Vulnerability. https://bing.com/search?q=anti-corruption+framework+in+Gambia Access 9 October 2023

also suffers from low wages, poor working conditions and inadequate training and equipment for civil servants[4]. Furthermore, The Gambia relies heavily on external aid and debt relief, which could limit its fiscal space and political independence[5].

How people and groups in a society behave is influenced by their shared values, beliefs, and practices. These are the social and cultural norms that shape how they think and act. They also affect how anti-corruption policies and laws are made and enforced in any country. This is especially true for The Gambia, which is a diverse and multi-ethnic country with many different groups. These groups may have different opinions and demands about corruption and governance, which affect how they relate to the authorities and institutions. Social and cultural norms can be both an opportunity and a challenge for anti-corruption reforms in The Gambia, which are currently stalled. On the positive side, social and cultural norms can foster dialogue and consensus among different groups on the importance and benefits of fighting corruption. There are groups that support anti-corruption initiatives because they value honesty, fairness, justice or national unity and integrity. On the negative side, social and cultural norms can hinder the advancement of anti-corruption reforms. This is because some groups resist anti-corruption measures because they fear losing power, privileges or patronage, or because they are loyal to their ethnic, religious or political group. Also, some cultural practices such as gift-giving, patronage, and nepotism are considered normal or even expected by some segments of society, while others may view them as corruption or favoritism. Moreover, some people may have low trust in the government and its anti-corruption efforts, because of the legacy of the previous regime or the perceived lack of progress and results of the current regime.

The Gambia urgently requires a policy and a legal framework to combat corruption, which is a serious problem that hampers its development and well-being in various aspects. Corruption is not only an economic issue, but also a breach of social and cultural values that should regulate the behaviour and performance of public officials and institutions. Corruption affects The Gambia's development negatively, as it erodes trust, rule of law and democracy. Citizens are becoming more disenchanted and sceptical of the government's ability and willingness to provide public goods and services, protect their rights and

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[4] IMF Assesses The Gambia's Corruption and Governance Vulnerability. https://gainako.com/imf-assesses-the-gambias-corruption-and-governance-vulnerability/ Access 9 October 2023
[5] Transparency International Knowledge Hub | Knowledge Hub. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-the-gambia Access 10 October 2023

represent their interests. This can lead to apathy, cynicism or resistance among the people[6].

Corruption is a serious problem that affects the economy and society in many ways. It undermines the trust and legitimacy of the government and makes it harder for the country to grow and develop. Corruption also distorts the allocation of resources, reduces efficiency and increases the cost of doing business. Furthermore, corruption stifles innovation, entrepreneurship and productivity. Corruption can also affect the government's ability to collect revenue and limit its fiscal capacity and political sovereignty[7].

Corruption also has negative impacts on poverty and inequality and weakens social cohesion and stability. It deprives poor and marginalized groups of basic services such as health, education, water and electricity. It also widens the gap between rich and poor and creates dissatisfaction and resentment among people. Corruption can also lead to conflict, violence and extremism, as people may resort to alternative or illegal ways to express their concerns or meet their needs[8].

According to a global survey by Transparency International, Gambia has made no significant progress against corruption in the public sector in 2022. The country's score 34 out of 100, where higher scores indicate lower levels of perceived corruption. However, Gambia still ranks low among 180 countries, at the 110th position, showing that it has more work to do to improve its governance and accountability[9].

The Gambia has made some progress in fighting corruption since a new government took office in 2017. It passed the Access to Information Bill, which gives the public more access to government information. It also created special commissions to investigate and prosecute the former President Yahya Jammeh and his allies for human rights and financial abuses. However, The Gambia still faces many challenges and gaps in its anti-corruption system. It did not complete a self-assessment of its efforts to prevent corruption and recover stolen assets, as required by the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It also lacks an

[6] Corruption in The Gambia - A disease that needs urgent cure. https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/opinion/corruption-in-the-gambia-a-disease-that-needs-urgent-cure. Access 11 October 2023

[7] The Gambia: Overcoming Corruption's Toll - IMF. https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/06/21/na062518-the-gambia-overcoming-corruptions-toll Access 11 October 2023

[8] The Gambia: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption. https://www.u4.no/publications/the-gambia-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption. Access 12 October 2023

[9] Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answer The Gambia. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Gambia-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-2022_PR.pdf

independent and effective anti-corruption commission to lead the fight against corruption in the country. Corruption is a major problem in The Gambia that harms its development and people's welfare. It weakens public institutions and officials, as well as the rule of law and democracy. It also reduces economic growth, lowers the country's competitiveness, increases poverty and inequality, and threatens social peace and stability[10].

Although civil society has more freedom since 2017, there are signs of democratic backsliding. Some activists faced harsh reactions and journalists were mistreated. Civil society organizations play a vital role in promoting good governance and fighting corruption in The Gambia, but they encounter difficulties such as limited capacity, resources and cooperation with public officials[11]. The country needs to address these issues and adopt the Anti-Corruption Bill 2019.

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[10] The Gambia: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption. https://www.u4.no/publications/the-gambia-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.
[11] Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in the Gambia. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/kproducts/Gambia-2021_Overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf